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THE ALASKA WEEKLY, FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 1954

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## TOKEN USE BY TRADERS SETS OFF PROBE AUTHORITIES CHARGE NATIVES BEING FLEECE

**ANCHORAGE:** Trading post owners in the Lower Yukon today are facing criminal prosecution for alleged victimizing of native customers by issuing them merchandise tokens in return for cash. Such practices violate federal statutes.

The Anchorage News reported Treasury agents and the District Attorney's office are investigating complaints that traders are perpetuating an old-time custom in Alaska whereby native customers trade cash, furs and services for "bingles" which can be redeemed only in merchandise.

Also investigating the complaints is William Olsen, director of the Alaska Native Service in Alaska. The News reported Olsen said he intends "to look into the matter thoroughly."

Complaints of many natives that their checks from salmon canneries or from other sources were immediately converted into inflated "bingles" or "jingles" by trading post owners reached missionaries along the river, who investigated and found the reports had basis in fact.

**Priest Reports to D.A.** "Father O'Connor, one of Alaska's best known missionaries, reported the matter to the district attorney's office here in a letter," said the News. "The Treasury Department was immediately called into the matter and an investigation is in progress."

The paper said a complaint is being prepared in the case. It reported that on a recent visit to Anchorage, Father James C. Spils, head of St. Mary's mission in Andreafsky, said the matter came to his attention when he observed that one trading post owner refused to give a native woman cash for her pension check. She wanted the money to obtain a C.O.D. package at the post office.

Father Spils said the "bingles" seemed to be confined only to the Lower Yukon area, with merchants and trading posts along the Upper Yukon dealing in cash.

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# EDITORIAL

We are a bit late this month, due to great weather and a Fourth of July trip to Seward! We will bring you more on the Seward trip in the August issue.

Candy Waugaman brought in the interesting item you will find on the front page. That tokens were still in use on the lower Yukon at this late date is quite intriguing. This was viewed as a local problem, as the article indicates that they were no longer used on the upper Yukon.

Along with a recap of our trip to Seward, next month we will bring you the next installment of Ron Benice's Mystery Tokens, covering Ketchikan to Ouzinkie.

Things are getting hectic in the Hanscom household. By the time you receive this, our 16 year old daughter Rochelle (Rocki) will be winging her way to Chile for a year long student exchange. She will be staying in Los Andes, a city of approximately 60,000 about an hour drive north of Santiago.

Mom and dad are concerned but not overly worried. She is a sharp, responsible kid, and we know she will have a great time. The pre-departure panic is setting in. Should she take this, should she leave that? She will have to condense five suitcase loads into two! Tears will definitely flow.

Because of my interest in Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia tokens, it has been suggested by others that she could be on the prowl for tokens. Let me assure you; this is not going to happen (unfortunately).

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# PRICES REALIZED

Selected prices realized from eBay:

<b>Chichagof</b> , Chich. Club, B-1a	10.50
<b>Cordova</b> , Rosswog, 6¼¢, B-34b	197.50
<b>Hawk Inlet</b> , Harris, 10¢, B-1b	129.77
<b>Fairbanks</b> , Univ. Bus, B-T7a	5.00OB
<b>Fort Yukon</b> , Hotel, B-4a	21.58
<b>Skagway</b> , Mascotte, B-17a	OB115.00NB
<b>Skagway</b> , McCreedy & Elliot, \$5, B-16f	18.20
<b>Skagway</b> , Shamrock, B-24a	OB49.99NB
<b>Valdez</b> , Copper Block, B-4a	OB49.95NB
<b>Valdez</b> , Copper Block, B-4a, relist	OB19.95
<b>Alaska Vintage...</b>	875.00

This lot included the following from Fairbanks:

International Hotel, B-29b, Horseshoe Cigar Store encased cent and Horseshoe Cigar Store spinner. The rest of the lot was inconsequential.

**Klondike Saloon** encased, Wisconsin 177.51

OB = Opening Bid                      NB = No Bid  
RNM = Reserve Not Met            R = Reserve

## S. GEORGIA & S. SANDWICH ISLANDS

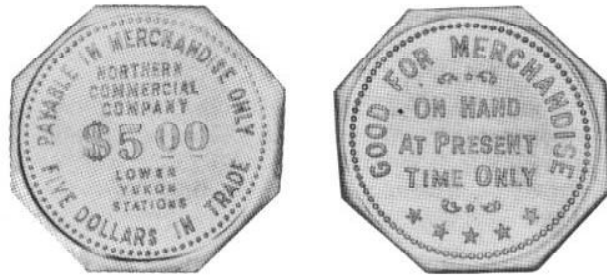
We wish we didn't have these to report, and are only doing so to fill the space. Pobjoy Mint strikes again with "coins" for South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands. South Georgia has a small scientific population, and the South Sandwich Islands might have a few people in the Antarctic summer. Just another attempt to fleece the collector. The items below commemorate the Queen's 50th anniversary of reign, the 5th anniversary of Princess Diana's death, Capt. Cook, and Prince Williams 21st birthday. Shown small than actual size.



## TOKEN USE, CONT.

**Unnecessary.** “I do not understand why any form of script or any substituted for cash is necessary anywhere in Alaska,” Father Spils said. “I have in my possession ‘bingles’ on which are printed ‘payable in merchandise only... good for merchandise on hand at present time only.’”

(Editor’s note: It seems obvious to us that Father Spils was referring to the Northern Commercial Company, Lower Yukon Stations tokens like the one illustrated here).



Father Spils said trading post owners do not attempt to pass off the bingles on whites, who won’t accept them. He said he has interceded many times with the trading post owners on behalf of the natives who needed some ready cash with which to make special purchases, or for purchase of items not in stock at the trading posts.

**Ancient Custom.** The “bingles,” also known as “jingles” and “jangles”, are an old-time custom along the Lower Yukon, stemming from the time when the supply of ready cash was short. This condition no longer exists and the “bingles, jingles or jangles” should be abolished, missionaries along the river declare.

“Bingles” are issued in denominations of 25 cents, 50 cents, \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20. Typical villages where “bingles” are in use include Andreafsky, Mt. Village, Pilot Station and St. Michael.



We can offer complete sets of the Mountain Village tokens for \$78, postpaid.

# CANADA FESTIVALS

One area we feel we are deficient is reporting on polar related coinage. We totally missed the Canada Festivals series of .925 silver 50¢ coins. Those relating to our areas of interest are illustrated to the right. Descriptions are from the Royal Canadian Mint's web page.



**Yukon International Storytelling Festival - 2003 50-Cent Sterling Silver Coin.** This year, Whitehorse is the place to be as the Canadian Festivals Series visits Yukon International Storytelling Festival to bring you the captivating delights of this unique event. People from around the world gather under the midnight sun to reveal ancient traditions of oral history and share modern forms of storytelling that are designed with pure enjoyment in mind.

**Toonik Tyme - 2001 50-Cent Sterling Silver Coin.** After the long dark winter, the people of Nunavut—"Our Land"—welcome the coming spring with fun, laughter and games. Toonik Tyme is the Inuit festival of spring. Have you ever played golf on an ice floe? Skated to the classics by the light of the aurora borealis? Mark the change in season and celebrate with the people of Iqaluit.



**Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival - 2001 50-Cent Sterling Silver Coin.** Kick up your heels and celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival in song and music. Showcasing the talents of local artists and developing musicians, the festival explores the culturally diverse vocal, instrumental and dance traditions.

**Great Northern Arts Festival - 2003 50-Cent Sterling Silver Coin.** A solitary figure gazing towards an aurora-filled sky conjures up all the mystique of the Northwest Territories. The design on the garment and the ornate braid reflect the power of life's necessities to inspire art.



## OLD ANTARCTIC EXPLORERS ASSOCIATION

The old Antarctic Explorers Association was formed in 1999. It's goal is to perpetuate public awareness of the courage, sacrifice and devotion its members displayed during their Antarctic experience.

OAEs are people who have served on "the ice" (Antarctica). FNGs (friggin new guys) are those that came after the OAEs. In a Catch-22 situation, everyone is both an OAE and an FNG!

A medal honoring the OAEs has been struck. The OAE logo was designed by Billy-Ace Penguin Baker. The Operation Deep Freeze side was designed for the Navy by Walt Disney Studios. The medals are available as follows:

- \$25.00 - .999 fine silver, 1 oz., in blue velvet case.
- \$20.00 - .999 fine silver, 1 oz., in snaplock case.
- \$12.00 - Antique bronze, bagged.
- \$10.00 - Antique brass, bagged.



- \$1.00 - Aluminum bagged.
- \$5.00 - 6 pcs. Aluminum bagged.
- \$65.00 - Full set (1 each plus 5 additional aluminum).
- \$60.00 - Full set (1 each)
- \$1.30 - insurance to \$50.00 ordered
- \$2.20 - insurance up to \$100.00 ordered.
- Actual postage will vary.
- Send orders to:
- Billy-Ace Penguin Baker, 10819 Berryhill Rd.,
- Pensacola, FL 32506-6201. Email [UPIZAUF@aol.com](mailto:UPIZAUF@aol.com).



# FOR THE RECORD



**SURING, WISCONSIN:** Here is a neat Klondike related item offered on eBay recently. “Compliments of Johnson & Nelson Prop’s of Klondike Saloon & Liberty Hall. From the eBay description: “Was told that Johnson and Nelson staked a claim in ’99 and did well enough to come home and build their new business with monies directly from the Klondike Gold Fields.” Regardless of the veracity of the story, a great piece that realized \$177.51 on eBay.



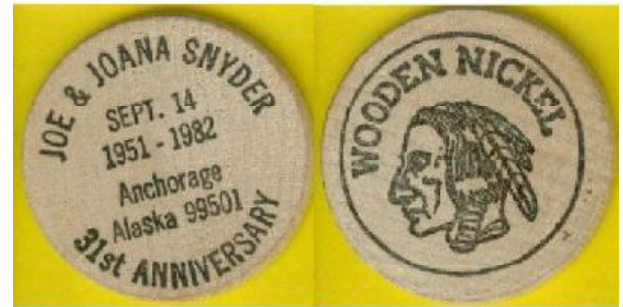
**KODIAK:** Naval Air Base key chain, gilt on copper, 31mm wide, 32mm tall (eBay)



**GANDER, NEWFOUNDLAND:** Presumably drink tokens from the Elks Lodge in Gander. White on blue and red on white. No size was given, but probably 37mm like other tokens of similar fabrication (eBay).



**ST. JOHN’S, NEWFOUNDLAND:** Kinsmen District 7, Newfoundland Soiree, St. John’s 1968. Reverse states “Souvenir Good For One BEER Souvenir.” Black on wood (eBay).



**ANCHORAGE:** Joe & Joanna Snyder, 31st Anniversary, Sept. 14, 1982. Black on wood.



**HAINES,???:** Haines Saloon, Brunswick & Balke, 5¢ in trade. On eBay, seller hypothesizes Alaska or Oregon. Our money is on Oregon. Still, a neat token. About quarter size, white metal (copper-nickel) (eBay, sold at opening bid of \$199).



**MAVERICK:** Hotel Juneau, Gene Becker, 5¢ in trade. On eBay attributed to Juneau. Could also be Wisconsin. No size given, appears to be brass. eBay, OB9.99, no bids.